

APR 2 1965

## 'Right to Know' Bill Backed By Press Officials at Hearing

By ROBERT K. WALSH  
Star Staff Writer

Spokesmen for the press and members of a House subcommittee on freedom of governmental information were in agreement today that public officials would be better off if they let the public know exactly what they were doing.

Richard D. Smyser, representing the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, told the subcommittee yesterday that legislation for the public's "right to know" would help federal agencies and improve the government.

"The bill is an inducement to these agencies to make fullest information available to the public," he said. "The fuller the information available, inevitably will the agency's programs and policies and purposes be better understood. And once understood by the public, these policies and programs and purposes are inevitably strengthened."

### Back Moss Bill

John H. Colburn, representing the American Newspaper Publishers Association, and two officials of the American Bar Association also endorsed the measure sponsored in the House by Rep. John Moss, D-Calif., the subcommittee chairman. The bill would make federal records, except for eight categories, available to any person.

Robert Benjamin of New York, who heads the Bar Association's committee on federal administrative procedures, and Crisman Hanes, Washington attorney who heads the ABA's freedom of information committee, suggested several changes in the bill, mainly to clarify some provisions and provide precise language.

They said they believed the bill met constitutional requirements without conflicting with the President's proper exercise of the executive privilege to withhold certain kinds of governmental information.

The bill, similar to one which passed the Senate last year but did not come up in the House, would require disclosure of and access to governmental information of all kinds except well-defined categories such as defense and foreign policy secrets. It would provide for court action to guarantee the right to obtain such information if refused.

Smyser, managing editor of Oak Ridger, Oak Ridge, Tenn., and Colburn, editor and publisher of the Wichita, Kan., Eagle-Beacon, emphasized that the news media and press organizations were not seeking any special privileges.

"APME would like to appear

a champion for a public right rather than a lobbyist for a private privilege," Smyser said.

The rapid growth of the federal structure and the complexity of problems, he said, make it more imperative than ever that all legitimate information about the federal government be made increasingly available.

"There is a certain basic wrong in the withholding of information," he went on. "It manifests a mistrust, a lack of faith in the ability of the public to examine the facts and come to a reasonable conclusion. It is a badge of cynicism and pessimism. . . . It is quite often the mask for corruption."